

Ervendberg Orphanage
Ervendberg Road (off Rural Rt. #1)
New Braunfels Vicinity
Comal County, Texas

HABS No. TEX-3145

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
1000 Geary Street
San Francisco, California

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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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THE ERVENDBERG ORPHANAGE
"DAS WAISENHAUS"

New Braunfels Vicinity, Comal County, Texas

ADDRESS: Ervendberg Road (off Rural Rt. #1), New Braunfels, Texas
OWNER: Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Acker, Jr.
OCCUPANT: Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Acker, Jr.
USE: Private Home
ARCHITECT &
BUILDER Johann Heinrich Meyne (Meine)

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The building is historically significant because it housed the first orphanage in the State of Texas. It is architecturally significant because it was a representative example of the "second" houses built by German emigrants (the first houses were log cabins).

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

New Braunfels was the first in a series of settlements founded in the wilderness of "West" Texas in 1845 and 1846 by the German Emigration Society. The Society (Company) sent over six thousand settlers from Germany to Texas. The first contingent was landed at Port Lavaca in the fall of 1844, and founded New Braunfels in March, 1845.

From October, 1845, to April, 1846, a total of 5247 additional settlers came on 36 sailships, who also were to be transported by wagons to New Braunfels, and from there to the Indian country.

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War declared on Mexico by the United States, in early 1846, caused available wagons and teams in Texas to be pressed into service to haul army supplies, which left thousands of the settlers stranded at the coast without proper housing and sanitary facilities. Climatic diseases broke out among them and developed into an epidemic.

Deaths among the settlers, as a result of the epidemic, were placed as high as 1200, and a large number of children were left orphans. Relatives and friends took care of many, but some were left without any help of this kind.

Something had to be done for the care and education of those orphans who were left without family or friends. The Reverend L. Cachant-Ervendberg, the first pastor, and his wife decided to take over the responsibility of providing for the care and education of these orphaned children.

Joined by two directors of the settlement, L. Bene and H. Spiess, Reverend Ervendberg secured a charter for the founding of, and erecting and maintaining of an institution for the protection, support, and education of orphaned children. This institution was called the West Texas Orphan Asylum, and was the first institution of its kind in Texas.

In 1848, Mrs. Maria Antonia Veramendi de Garza of San Antonio, daughter of Juan Martin Veramendi, former Governor of Texas under the Mexican regime, in consideration of the charitable objectives for which the orphan asylum was incorporated, granted the institution 150 acres of her inheritance, to which Francis Gilbeau, merchant of San Antonio, for the same consideration, added 168 acres of the Veramendi land he owned; these tracts were some $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from New Braunfels on the west bank of the Guadalupe River.

A house was built, on a rise backed up by the Guadalupe River, large enough to provide for the Ervendberg family and 19 orphans. These children were taught in regular classes; the boys were also instructed in farming and the girls in household duties.

The establishment ran smoothly until 1855, when unexpected domestic difficulties resulted in the departure of Mrs. Ervendberg for Chicago, and the pastor's leavetaking for Mexico, where he later met a violent end. Fortunately, all of the orphaned children had by this time reached maturity, and did not need the care originally necessary.

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In 1858, Mrs. Louisa C. Ervendberg obtained personal possession of the institution's properties, and through her marriage to Balthasar Preiss the properties are now in the possession of the descendants of her children by Mr. Preiss.

Alterations and Additions: The house was first changed in 1913, when the partition between the two center rooms was removed and replaced by a neo-classic flat arch, and a partition was removed in the original living area. The front double door was replaced by a single door and many of the original doors and windows were replaced. Nearly all interior trim was changed to a moulded Victorian pattern, and many of the old floors replaced. The porch columns, the fireplaces, hardware and some other items were either removed or covered. The original "colonial" exterior siding was replaced with the moulded type generally known as "117". Walls were papered and many ceilings were replaced with T&G flooring material.

In 1961-62, the present owners and occupants refurbished the house in very good taste; although a "restoration" was not attempted, the remaining original construction evidences were preserved, and the house was painted gray with white trim.

The present owners possess old pictures of the house taken before any changes, other than the addition of the first siding, had been made. The San Antonio Express used these pictures in a feature article on September 8, 1935.

REFERENCES

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- New Braunfelser Zeitung, November 29, 1945, and January 21, 1853.
- Mrs. Herbert Stollewerck Acker, Rt. #1, New Braunfels, Texas
- Comal County Deed Records, Book E-768
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ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Architectural Character: One story and attic building built on a "U" plan with gabled roof and with porch across front supported by 5" posts and lintels. System of construction was half-timber frame with sun-dried adobe brick filler and covered with weather boarding.

Condition of Fabric: In good repair and occupied as a residence.

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions: 39 ft. wide by 55 ft. deep; Porch 8 ft. wide.

Foundations: Field stone, rough faced, and laid up in lime mortar in rough ashlar fashion.

Wall Construction: Frame of hand-hewn and sawn cedar timbers joined with mortise and tenon and wood pegs and filled with sun-dried mud brick, in the fashion of half-timber "fachwerk" construction, 8 in. thick. Exterior faced with milled weather-boarding in later years; all sills, girders and rafters were of hand-hewn cedar.

Porch: Shed type, at lower pitch than roof, supported by six 5 in. square chamfered cedar posts and cedar lintels; wood floor. Porch columns are now boxed and provided with cap, neck mould and base.

Chimneys and Fireplaces: Existed in the school room and in the kitchen, but have been removed. A cast iron stove, still extant, was introduced in 1863.

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Openings:

Doorways and Doors - Originally, four panel, with double doors at front entrance. Some doors are of board and batten construction. 1 in. by 3 in. single beaded trim.

Windows - 9/9 light, double hung, not counterbalanced, guarded by adjustable louver shutters.

Roof: Main roof approximately 4 in 12 pitch, with cedar shakes on wood lath, sawn one side only. Gable ends without overhang. Roof presently has corrugated iron at front slope of front element and standing seam metal on back slope. Rear wings have cedar shingles.

Cornice: Plain boxed cornice with about 6 in. overhang. Lintel at porch forms cornice.

INTERIOR

Floor plan: Two rooms deep at center and four rooms deep on each side forming a "U" plan. The rear room on the right was the kitchen. The pastor's living quarters were in the front rooms on the right hand side. The main ceilings are 10'-4" high.

Flooring: Wide boards of pine, walnut, mesquite, cedar and pecan secured with handmade square nails.

Wall and Ceiling Finish: All interior walls and ceilings originally were lime plaster with straw binder over wood wattle lath. The old school room and kitchen storage area are virtually in their original condition.

Doors: Interior doors were four panel with vertical center rail.

Trim: Originally 1 x 3 single beaded; some of the original trim has been changed to moulded Victorian pattern with corner blocks.

Partitions: Interior partitions 5 in. thick, of same construction as exterior walls.

Hardware: Hand made wrought iron.

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Lighting: Now wired for electricity.

OUTBUILDINGS:

Consist of a barn and a "Kornhaus", or granary, built of cedar log sills, uprights, girders and rafters, rough sawn shingle strips and cedar shake roofing, largely of original construction. Exterior walls of rough sawn vertical boards. There was a natural stone masonry lime kiln about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the house.

SITE

Situated on a rise near the Guadalupe River, with house facing west. The rear court, where the well for domestic water was located, was surfaced with flagstone.

Enclosed by picket fence - not original.

Landscaping - modest home garden and scattering of trees.

Prepared by,

Marvin Eickenroht

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Committee on Preservation of
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(Assisted by Mr. Oscar Haas,
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September 1963

APPROVED:

Charles S. Pope

Charles S. Pope, AIA
Supervising Architect, Historic Structures
Western Office, Design and Construction
National Park Service

DATE: *October 16, 1963*